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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 603rd MEETING*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 January 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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* No summary records were issued for the 600th to 602nd meetings.

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GE.00-40447 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6)(continued)

Initial report of Armenia (CRC/C/28/Add.9) (HRI/CORE/1/Add.57, CRC/C/Q/ARM/1 (list of issues); written replies of the Government of Armenia to the questions raised in the list of issues (document without a symbol))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Martirossian, Mr. Kazhoyan and Mr. Nazarian (Armenia) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. NAZARIAN (Armenia) transmitted to the Committee a message of goodwill from the First Lady of Armenia, further to her letter of September 1999 to the previous Chairperson. In addition to a number of laws enacted since his country's ratification of the Convention in 1992, a Human Rights Commission had been set up, and Parliament had passed a bill establishing a National Commission on the Rights of the Child. Despite the grave consequences of the earthquake that had devastated the country in December 1988, and the massive influx of refugees from Azerbaijan in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Government had assigned high priority to the implementation of the Convention.

3. Mr. KAZHOYAN (Armenia) said that, despite post-independence problems - the earthquake, the economic blockade and the difficulties inherent in the transition to a market economy - Armenia had remained faithful to the value it attached to families and children, for whose protection the Government was doing its utmost to create a legislative and practical framework. It had received valuable support in that endeavour from local agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and United Nations agencies, especially the Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Erevan. UNICEF had included all the relevant ministries, NGOs and United Nations agencies in Erevan in its annual meeting to review its activities.

4. His delegation attached great importance to its discussion with the Committee members. Prior to its departure for Geneva, it had issued a press release about its appearance before the Committee. The Government would publicize the discussion with the Committee and the Committee's concluding observations, in order to inform Armenian society of its achievements and difficulties in enforcing children's rights.

5. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee members to put questions to the delegation on the first three sections of the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/ARM/1).

6. Mrs. SARDENBERG welcomed the timely presentation of Armenia's report and written replies, which had been drafted in a spirit of frankness and modesty. Unfortunately, the drafters had produced only three chapters, failing to follow the guidelines, whose purpose was to furnish the Committee with information on all relevant areas. The written replies had also overlooked certain fundamental areas, which hindered the Committee in its task of assessing, in addition to child-rights policy, the way in which those rights were exercised.

7. Despite the problems involved in Armenia's transition to a market economy, exacerbated by the 1988 earthquake which had caused the displacement and homelessness of many inhabitants and the destruction of much of its industrial capacity, she had noted positive trends. The country's growth rate had increased, it had ratified the six major international human rights instruments and it submitted reports regularly to the treaty bodies. Also worthy of note were the adoption in 1996 of the Rights of the Child Act, the establishment of the Human Rights Commission by Presidential Decree, the translation of the Convention into Armenian, the signing of the Declaration that had emerged from the World Summit for Children, and the decision to set up a National Commission on the Rights of the Child and establish an ombudsman's office, concerning which she would appreciate further information.

8. She asked whether the impact on children of the Rights of the Child Act had been evaluated in the four years since its adoption. Inasmuch as the report had not covered general measures of implementation, she would like to know the impact on implementation efforts of the Presidential Decree establishing the various areas of competence within the relevant ministries. As the Human Rights Commission appeared to be a Government body, she wondered whether there was a conflict of interest regarding its task. She also wished to know whether the National Commission on the Rights of the Child had actually been set up, and, if so, with what composition, budget and specific objectives, within whose remit it fell, and whether it possessed a coordination mechanism.

9. Mrs. KARP asked what proportion of international aid was earmarked for children's issues, whether any decision had been taken to allocate a particular percentage for the promotion of children's rights and what appropriations had been set aside for children's issues other than education and health. She would appreciate information about changes which the new legislation and regulations referred to in the written replies had brought about in day-to-day life and practice, whether they reflected the principles enshrined in the Convention and whether they provided guidance for people working with children - not only teaching staff, but also social and other workers.

10. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ noted that health expenditure had declined from 2.7 per cent to 1.1 per cent between 1990 and 1995 and that the percentage of the budget spent on education had also been reduced. She asked how expenditures on child-related activities were coordinated and how the authorities implemented article 4 of the Convention concerning allocation of resources to activities concerned with economic, social and cultural rights. She would also like to know whether there was planning for expenditure on action related to children's rights or any intention to increase it. Were any legislative measures foreseen to improve what appeared to be an outmoded administration of education and health services?

11. Ms. RILANTONO, while acknowledging Armenia's efforts to cope with its myriad problems, said she was disturbed to note that the unemployment rate was 50 per cent; that state of affairs could only increase school drop-out statistics, reduce health-service coverage and quality and hamper efforts to increase the education budget. Endorsing Mrs. Karp's remarks, she asked whether Armenia had a national plan for rescheduling its budget allocations to address children's rights, which was a multidisciplinary area involving health, education and juvenile justice. She would also like to know whether cooperation with NGOs was envisaged within the framework of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child. Despite claims that there

were no child-related NGOs in Armenia, there must be social welfare agencies with a potential role to play in the area of children's rights; such bodies should be represented on the National Commission on the Rights of the Child.

12. Mr. RABAH, referring to Mrs. Rilantono's remarks, asked whether the relevant ministries maintained contacts with child rights agencies, what mechanism existed for coordination with such agencies and whether there was a specific plan of action to ensure the exercise of children's rights in the new decade.

13. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked how the provisions of article 4 of the Convention were implemented in terms of budgetary allocations, given Armenia's difficult economic situation. She also inquired about the Government's relationships with NGOs, whether it planned to invo've NGOs in implementation of the Convention, what policies were in place to monitor treatment of children receiving alternative care and what training was available to people working with children.

14. Mr. DOEK said that the conference held in Armenia in 1998 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had concluded that there were no specific mechanisms in Armenia for incorporating the provisions of international human rights instruments into national human rights legislation. He would like to know whether there had been any recent developments in that regard. He would also appreciate information about the results of the 1994 mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide assistance to the Government of Armenia in drafting a national plan of action for human rights.

15. Regarding the definition of the child, the report stated that the minimum age for marriage was 17. He would like to know whether that meant that no one under the age of 17 could marry, even with parental consent. Clarification would also be appreciated of the figure given in the written reply to question 3 for the total number of children under 18. If the figure of 275,626 was correct, that meant that children under 18 represented only 7 per cent of the population, which was a disturbingly low level. The report stated that the age of criminal responsibility was generally 16 but that children aged 14 or 15 could be held responsible if they committed serious crimes. He would like to know how the law regarded children under 14 who committed crimes. He also asked whether the Criminal Code was applied to minors over the age of 16 or whether a separate juvenile criminal code existed.

16. The information given on general principles in the report was encouraging. He enquired whether there were councils in schools and care institutions which involved children in the decision-making process.

The meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 10.55 a.m.

17. Mr. MARTIROSSIAN (Armenia) said that, having been a teacher for 15 years and as the father of four children, he had a personal as well as an official interest in children's issues. His delegation might not be able to give complete replies to all the questions put by members of the Committee because, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country had been going through a period of transition. The process of establishing a new system was complicated by the fact that

vestiges of the old system, including an attitude of inertia, still existed. The country's problems had been compounded by other factors, such as earthquakes and unemployment, in isolation from which it was impossible to consider children's issues.

18. There was no budget allocation specifically for child-related issues in Armenia. However, resources were allotted to other sectors, such as health, education and humanitarian assistance, which had an impact on children. The needs of families with children were also taken into account by his own ministry, the Ministry of Social Welfare.

19. Laws already existed on the rights of the child, but they were considered inadequate. The Ministry of Social Welfare, which dealt with issues affecting women and children, was in the process of drafting more comprehensive laws to ensure that the country's obligations under the Convention were fulfilled.

20. The Government attached great importance to its relations with NGOs, as attested by the programmes it was carrying out jointly with UNICEF. A number of NGOs were active in the area of children's issues in general, although none dealt specifically with the rights of the child. The Government planned to give continued support to such NGOs in the future.

21. Mr. KAZHOYAN (Armenia), referring to a remark by Mrs. Sardenberg, said that the Government had not been aware of the Committee's guidelines until after the submission of the report. The report had been prepared by five Government ministries, but without NGO involvement. A large number of NGOs had become established in Armenia since independence. There had been a period of antagonism between NGOs and the Government, but relations had since improved. NGOs would be invited to participate in the preparation of the second periodic report, which was already under way, and they had contributed to the preparation of the written replies to the list of issues for the current meeting.

22. Despite the absence of specific legislation thereon, most of the requirements of the Convention had been incorporated into the Constitution and other laws and regulations. On being elected in 1998, the President of Armenia had issued a decree establishing a Human Rights Commission. Despite its shortcomings the Commission was an important body dealing with a full range of human rights issues, including the rights of the child. Its most important work to date had been the drafting of a law on the establishment of an ombudsman, which had recently been presented to the National Assembly for consideration.

23. The bodies responsible for children's rights issues were the Administration for Women and Children's Affairs of the Ministry of Social Welfare, a department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs which deal with child care and the Gender Commission, which dealt with women's issues and some children's issues. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently begun a procedure for establishing a Government body with specific responsibility for children's rights. It was not yet clear how the new body would function, but the matter was shortly to be discussed, at the first meeting of an expert working group comprising representatives of Government agencies, the international community and NGOs working in the area of children's issues. Many unsuccessful attempts had been made in the past to set up such a body; he hoped that the current discussion with the Committee would serve as an impetus to make the latest attempt a successful one.

24. In reply to a question by Mrs. Karp, he said that all new legislation entered into force the day after its publication in the official newspaper of the National Assembly.

25. A significant factor which had impeded progress in implementing the Convention was the country's difficult economic situation; it had been improving over the past few years, but the process was still slow. Since independence, the large Armenian Diaspora had provided substantial aid to the country in many different fields, including children's issues. For example, the relief fund of the Armenian Apostolic Church had helped to finance centres which had all but eradicated the problem of homeless children in Erevan. In the case of a child who had a family, the centres held discussions with the parents before returning the child to them; children who had no family were placed in children's homes financed by the Government and donor organizations. Armenia also received assistance from other countries; for example, the Government of Argentina had provided financial assistance to rebuild a secondary school in Erevan, and the British Embassy had helped to arrange computer classes for the inmates of a juvenile offenders' institution in the capital. Many organizations and institutions, both Armenian and foreign, had contributed to the provision of training in children's rights issues for teachers and health-care professionals.

26. Special programmes to address issues affecting disabled children had been launched by the Government, with the help of relevant NGOs. Disabled children had always been taught in separate schools to date, but attitudes in that regard were gradually changing.

27. Replying to Mr. Doek, he said that a programme aimed at establishing a national plan of action for human rights was due to be elaborated in 2000, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The programme would also include training of staff members of Government agencies and other human rights bodies, in order to give them a better understanding of how the international human rights instruments should work in practice. A seminar on elaborating a national plan of action for human rights had recently been organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the participants' conclusions were to be published shortly.

28. Although the minimum age for marriage was 17 years, children of 16 were able to marry with parental consent. Changes would be made in the legislation in order to deal with such inconsistencies. However, no child under 16 could marry.

29. Replying to a question by Mr. Doek, he said that the figures given in the written reply to question 3 referred not to the total number of children under 18 but to the number of children in families receiving benefits.

30. Information regarding the application of the Criminal Code to children had been provided in the report. The Abovyan educational and labour colony for women and juvenile offenders had achieved considerable success in rehabilitating its inmates.

31. Groups such as school councils enabling children to participate in the decision-making process were becoming more common, although much remained to be done in that area. Examples of such councils in European schools were being studied to see whether they might be suitable for Armenia.

32. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions on civil rights and freedoms and family environment and alternative care.

33. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that one of the main tasks facing Armenia was to change society's attitude towards children to achieve a more democratic perception of their rights. The Presidential Human Rights Commission and the National Commission on the Rights of the Child must bear political weight and have a positive impact on the situation of children.

34. She asked whether it would be possible to accelerate the official registration process for NGOs, which was apparently very complex and time-consuming. Given the progress made in relations with NGOs, it was important to use the Convention as a political tool for the integration of civil society into the process of implementing human rights in general and children's rights in particular. With regard to the national plan of action, it was important to consider the possibility of setting up a campaign to integrate all the activities conducted and to send a strong message to the general public.

35. She stressed the importance of providing an appropriate definition of the child, in accordance with article 2 of the Convention. No reference had been made to the question of discrimination against the girl child. She would like to know the exact position of women in Armenian society. Were they able to participate in politics, were the authorities working to improve their situation, and were disaggregated data available on subjects such as the enrolment of girls in schools?

36. It was important to establish whether illegitimate children were subject to discrimination or whether they had the same rights as all other children. Very few examples were provided of the implementation of article 12 of the Covenant relating to the participation of children. Although a legal basis for children's participation existed, it had not been made clear whether appropriate mechanisms had been established in schools. As it had been stated that Armenian society was centred on the family, she asked what was the reaction of families to the idea of children's participation in areas affecting them. On the whole, the new legislation, which complied with international human rights instruments, appeared to contradict the reality of a traditional society. That being the case, she asked whether consideration had been given to integrating sectors such as the schools, church, Parliament and local communities into the implementation process.

37. Mrs. KARP asked what percentage of international aid, including that provided by Armenians living abroad, was devoted to children's programmes. She would also like to know what infrastructure had been provided for children's complaints against parental abuse. Did the office of ombudsman, include a special unit responsible for children, and were there committees or lobby groups in Parliament which dealt with children's issues?

38. In the light of the reference made to the inertia of the authorities working with children, it was important to ascertain what guidelines and model codes of practice existed for the implementation of the general principles of the Convention. The inclusion of guidelines in areas such as guardianship and the placement of children, for example, would enable those working with and for children to consider their activities from a different point of view.

39. Referring to the right to personal integrity, she said that Armenian legislation included provisions on abuse, ill-treatment and torture. Armenia had also ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The written replies stated that no cases or complaints of torture or ill-treatment against minors had been recorded. However, the question of police brutality, especially during pre-trial detention, had been raised by certain human rights groups. She wondered in that connection whether a distinction was made between acts of brutality against adults and those committed against children. Was the absence of complaints a matter of children not daring to complain, or of complaints not being properly investigated? Information should be provided, as a matter of urgency, on Armenia's policy on the protection of children from police brutality.

40. Regarding the related subject of abuse in welfare institutions and within families, she noted that Armenia lacked official machinery to monitor or prevent child abuse. The written reply to question 16 stated that the issue of child abuse was alien to Armenian social consciousness because it contradicted moral attitudes regarding the status of children in the family and society. That statement should be clarified, as irrespective of the manner in which it was interpreted, the reference to morality gave cause for concern. Did Armenia plan to develop the relevant mechanisms for monitoring and receiving children's complaints?

41. In conclusion, she asked whether the Armenian authorities had taken steps to implement the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to enact legislation to combat racial incitement.

42. Mrs. RILANTONO welcomed the future National Commission on the Rights of the Child and said that the proposed multisectoral approach was a sound one. She suggested that a working group should be set up to prepare the strategy for the National Commission, with the assistance of NGOs.

43. The report stated that women received equal pay for equal work but in general did not have the same professional opportunities as men and were often relegated to menial and low-skilled jobs. In addition, a report issued by a women's group had stated that 73 per cent of officially registered unemployed people were women, contrary to the 1992 Employment Act, which prohibited discrimination against female workers. She asked whether such discrimination began in girlhood.

44. No information about birth registration had been provided in the report. Were activities conducted to create awareness of the birth registration process? She would also like to know whether a national censorship body existed to prevent the dissemination of harmful information through violence and pornography.

45. Mr. RABAH requested clarification of the written reply to question 9, which stated that increasing numbers of Armenian children were living away from their families and that most of those children were in the care of special organizations such as children's homes, boarding schools and clinics. Additional information regarding the mechanisms used to run such institutions would be welcome. Did NGOs have a role to play in that area? He also asked whether the concept of the foster family, as an alternative form of family care, existed. Similarly, the written replies stated that children belonging to national minorities enjoyed exactly

the same rights as Armenian children and were not discriminated against in any way. Were statistics on children belonging to minority groups available in relation to the health and education sectors? He would also like to know whether children had the right to express their views in schools and within families, and, in the event of separation of the parents, whether they were able to be heard in court.

46. Mr. DOEK said that the committees responsible for guardianship, foster care and adoption at local and provincial level were apparently no longer functioning. He drew attention to the importance of such committees in assessing family situations prior to ordering formal foster care and adoption. He would appreciate further information regarding financial problems in relation to guardianship. The attitude of Armenian society towards inter-country and national adoption appeared to be ambivalent, despite the existence of a committee of deputy ministers responsible for such matters. It had been stated that adoptions were shrouded in secrecy due to the stigma attached to them. Were any efforts being made in that regard?

47. As of August 1998 over 200 children in State-run institutions had been de facto parentless. What was being done to provide foster care and adoption procedures for those children, given that institutional care should be reduced to the shortest possible period?

48. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TAHTELA, asked whether children had the right to establish their own organizations. At the municipal level, were authorities responsible for children's issues elected by local people, and were the committees responsible for guardianship elected or appointed? In that connection, she asked whether children participated at the municipal level. It had been stated that Armenia was encountering very difficult environmental problems, she wondered whether children had the right to express their views on such matters.

The meeting was suspended at 12.05 p.m. and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

49. Mr. NAZARIAN (Armenia), referring to discrimination against women, said that half the members of the governmental Gender Commission were women, as were 30 per cent of the members of the Presidential Human Rights Commission. The church and the Government maintained a constructive dialogue. Given the traditional role of the church in the history of Armenian statehood, a number of relief organizations were active, and the Government tried to promote such activities by directing relief to the areas in greatest need. With reference to the apparently complex process of registration for NGOs, he said that over 1,700 such organizations existed in Armenia, a very large number for a nation of 3 million people.

50. Mr. MARTIROSSIAN (Armenia) said that there was no discrimination in practice against women or children in Armenia. The fact that 70 per cent of officially registered unemployed people were women, was a manifestation not of discrimination, but of a lack of competitiveness in the employment sphere on the part of women. Women should therefore be given assistance to enable them to improve their qualifications and obtain jobs.

51. Illegitimate children actually had greater social rights and privileges than ordinary children. Similarly, single-parent families received extra State assistance. Concerning national

minorities, the Russian, Ukrainian, Kurdish and Assyrian communities in Armenia all had their own schools and the opportunity to develop their cultures through the existence of associations and the provision of budgetary resources.

52. The Government had recently introduced a new adoption regime including the establishment of an adoption commission, of which he was a member. Although orphanages existed, the aim of the Government was to direct parentless children into families, and that effort had been meeting success. Following the earthquake, a children's colony had been started with the assistance of a German organization.

53. The complaints procedure for children to lodge complaints about abuse was new in Armenia, which explained the absence of qualified personnel in that field. To date, the institution traditionally dealing with children's problems had been the family. The family and community at large placed the child at the centre of their concerns, and the State attached the highest priority to children's welfare.

54. He acknowledged the need to disseminate information on the Convention to the public and to seek its opinion in that regard, an issue which the Government planned to address.

55. Mr. KAZHOYAN (Armenia) said that of the 1,700 registered NGOs in Armenia, approximately 50 specialized in women's rights and about 25 in children's rights. The workload connected to world summit follow-up meetings was usually too heavy for a new State, especially considering the frequency with which summits were held. However, the country would be in a position to give attention to the 2001 follow-up meeting to the World Summit for Children.

56. Considerable information about the rights of the girl child was contained in Armenia's initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/ARM/1), including disaggregated data relating to girls and boys. However, it should be said that Armenians did not discriminate between boys and girls: for them, a child was a child. No cases of abuses against girl children had been reported. The fact that the Armenian delegation consisted solely of men was irrelevant; in fact, it enjoyed the strong support of women's rights NGOs.

57. A problem remained, however, in that only five women had been elected in the latest National Assembly elections. Regrettably, Armenia had no women ministers, although there was a small number of female junior ministers. In the municipal elections held in December 1999, only 4.7 per cent of those elected had been women, a low figure considering that 64 per cent of Armenian women were university graduates, 35 per cent of faculty members in institutions of higher learning were women and up to 90 per cent, in some cases, of the staff of educational and health institutions were women.

58. Regarding children born out of wedlock and the children of minority groups, each child was accorded equal treatment irrespective of his or her social, ethnic or religious affiliation. Concerning child-rights education, although there was a lack of textbooks on the subject, human rights education was firmly established in schools. Greater emphasis was placed on human

rights education in institutions of higher learning, such as the police academy, which had introduced a special human rights course and a course on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

59. With regard to Mrs. Karp's question on international assistance, as his delegation had no figures on allocations to activities for children, it was difficult to establish a proportion. For practical reasons, assistance received from international financial institutions was usually earmarked for specific programmes, but assistance from donor countries, channelled through UNICEF, was oriented towards women and children.

60. Children were free to lodge complaints about child abuse, although no such cases had been recorded. Freedom of the press had brought about the removal of taboos, and there was no doubt that any cases of abuse or violence committed against children would have been reported by the press and NGOs. If children did not avail themselves of their right to report abuse, parents or legal guardians could do so. Cases of police brutality had been reported and prosecuted, and those found guilty had been punished. However, no cases of police brutality against minors had been reported.

61. There had been extensive discussion among NGOs and in the National Human Rights Commission, which represented national minority groups, about the establishment of an ombudsman. Two possible models had been suggested: an ombudsman dealing with a range of issues or, following the Swedish model, a separate ombudsman for each issue. The Government had chosen the first option. It had been agreed that the ombudsman should enjoy the trust of the public and be a person of sound moral standing.

62. The provisions of the Convention had been incorporated into domestic legislation, even to the extent of some of its wording being replicated.

63. Only a few minor cases of corporal punishment had been reported, as parents and teachers rarely thought of administering it. With the inflow of technology and information into the country, the situation had been changing, although disapproval of violence against children had generally remained strong. Under the Criminal Code, parents could be deprived of their parental rights if they committed acts of violence or abuse against their children, in keeping with the traditional view that the child was central to the family unit. He hoped that outside influences would not alter that traditional moral stance.

64. Armenia had a long-standing tradition of adoption owing to a tragic history which had begun with the genocide of Armenians under the Ottoman Empire. Recent events such as the earthquake and the massacres of Armenian populations in Azerbaijan had left many children orphaned. The Government's policy was to place children in adoptive families or foster care wherever possible, although economic problems frequently rendered foster care difficult for many families.

65. Although the Government was able to control the adoption procedure at the national level, the situation was more complex when it came to adoptions of Armenian children abroad. However, criteria existed governing inter-country adoptions, including the provision of proof of financial standing. Replying to Mr. Doek, he said the decision to keep adoption secret from the

child and the community remained the prerogative of the adoptive parents, and the adoption authority abided by that decision. Fortunately for the children concerned, however, it could not be said that there was any stigma attached to adoption.

66. The budget of the Human Rights Commission was an important issue which would be discussed in the near future, since the Commission was expected to start operating within the next year. Regarding child pornography, although no censorship body existed, the dissemination of pornographic material to children was punishable under the Criminal Code. Replying to Mr. Rabah, he said that no child had so far been allowed to testify in his or her parents' divorce proceedings.

67. With regard to national minorities, a Council of Europe delegation, which had visited Armenia when the latter had been seeking accession to the Council, had assessed the minority situation in the educational, social and political spheres and had made no reference to violations of the rights of minority children. However, problems arose with regard to instruction in minority languages. Instruction was offered in only two minority languages to date, with assistance from the State and the authorities of the communities concerned. Other minorities which were more dispersed encountered greater problems, but many of their children attended Sunday or weekend schools.

68. Replying to Mrs. Tigerstedt-Tähtelä, he said that children were able to establish their own organizations, which tended to be of a cultural and sports-oriented nature.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.